Dear Jim,

If Nixon's tapes transcripts was, as I believe we agree, the least unattractive of only bad alternatives, and that he had figured it carefully in advance, planned in close detail and timed for special purposes, would you ggree that to this moment this is his most perilous?

In my view he had no choice but to force those who he'd have preferred not to force, those who now must decide whether or not they can get away with taking more of his crap. My hunch at the moment, without having read more than the morning's headlines but having seen the CBS TV a.m. news, is that while he'll lose some support he is not yet lost only because everyone else is so cowardly, so afraid of imagined consequences.

In his major purpose he can't lose. That is to stall. I thinkthat what he has contrived may prolong the agony more than now seems apparent. He has a legal position that can be tested and retested, with issue to be ruled on all the way after issue.

Meanwhile, he has delayed if not ended his major peril, that his closest would talk in self defense. I mean chiefly Ehrlichman.

It has all been pretty raw, but it has not been without its subtleties. In fact, given the circumstances as I see them, I think it is pretty clever, the best he could do. Not that I've thought his alternatives true. But he sure has lots of balls tokeep in the air and thus far, afteralmost two years, they are still in the air.

I wonder if you agree on this as his least dangerous alternative?

Best, HW 5/21/74